

1995

Virginia Commonwealth University's plan for a diverse community

Matthew T. Corkern

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Corkern, Matthew T., "Virginia Commonwealth University's plan for a diverse community" (1995). *Honors Theses*. 1136.
<https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses/1136>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

95007



**Virginia Commonwealth University's
Plan for A Diverse Community of the Future**

by

Matthew T. Corkern

Senior Project

Jepson School of Leadership Studies

University of Richmond

Richmond, VA

April 1995

The University of Richmond

CAPSTONE PAPER

Virginia Commonwealth University's
Plan for A Diverse Community of the Future

for Dr. Gill Hickman

by Matthew Thomas Corkern

April 21, 1995

Virginia Commonwealth University's **Plan for A Diverse Community of the Future**

Use power to help people. For we are given power not to advance our own purposes nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name. There is but one just use of power and it is to serve people.¹

This quote taken from a speech by former President George Bush, personifies my conception of leadership and why I perceive educators as the best leaders within today's society.

Having always been intrigued by academic administration, it is only appropriate that I chose to study leadership perspectives within this traditional, yet ever changing context. Desiring the challenge of intellectual development as well as an opportunity to bring an effective change, I researched and assembled a pilot project. With use of this procedure, the Office of Academic Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), may now analyze the implementation of various directions and components of their Strategic Plan over the next months for the September 1995 deadline.

As one will see, this project allowed me to enhance my leadership skills both through the development of my pilot project and the conceptualization of leadership within this academic context. This capstone experience promoted the individual study of organizational change and intrinsic leadership among members of the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Community.

¹John C. Maxwell, Leadership 101: Inspirational Quotes & Insights for Leaders (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Honor Books, Inc., 1994), 11.

PILOT PROJECT

Virginia Commonwealth University is a public, urban, research university, supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia to serve the people of the commonwealth and the nation. The University provides a fertile and stimulating environment for learning, teaching, research, creative expression, and public service.²

As expressed in this excerpt of VCU's mission statement, this university is striving to become a leader among similar universities. An important aspect of this transition is the current Strategic Plan. This five-year plan has determined fifteen strategic directions which must be implemented before the process ends in 1999. Less than twenty years old, VCU is now planning towards an astonishing future not only within the confines of higher education, but also within the realm of humanity from where its students will emanate.

As this plan emerged two years ago, various individuals were selected to implement and oversee the specific directions. In order for this plan to become a reality, each person must work to assure success within his or her assigned arena of VCU. The Provost and the Office of Academic Planning have been given the task of following each direction and administering the entire operation from an aloft vision as to where VCU must be by certain dates.

As VCU's September 1994 Implementation Report began to circulate among its faculty and administration last semester, I began a search for a senior project that unknowingly would lead me to become very involved within this strategic planning process. Previously, I had worked for President Morrill on a smaller task force and assisted with a student-draft which

²Virginia Commonw
(Office of Graduate Admissions, July 1992), Volume XXVI, No. 3.
Page 2.

outlined how the Richmond College Student Government Association could become further involved as denoted by Richmond's Five-Year Plan.

After being guided toward VCU's Strategic Plan in December 1994, I chose to work on reviewing the implementation of Strategic Direction (SD) #4. This direction actually states: "*To promote targeted areas of excellence among the university's educational programs, including the re-allocation of resources where appropriate.*"³ This beneficial aspect provides opportunities to examine the academic planning aspects of VCU and to concentrate on specific areas concerned with enhancement.⁴

Following consultations with officials from VCU, I determined the need for a pilot project that would enable effective assessment of the Strategic Plan's impact on identified programs and the subsequent impact on stakeholders {faculty, staff, and students} and their concerns {finances and curriculum}. This project was composed of a pilot test instituted as a case study and a comprehensive analysis. It was (and remains) my opinion that this two-part pilot project should be used to evaluate the impact of the Strategic Plan.

In order to create and examine the quality of my pilot test, I decided to concentrate on one specific program within Strategic Direction #4 (section one), which had been commended for excellence and slated for specific funds. Due to my previous historical knowledge, I chose to use the history department as my case study.

³Report of the Commission on the Future of the University, A Strategic Plan For The Future of Virginia Commonwealth University (Office of Academic Planning, September 1993), 6.

⁴Appendix I -- CAPSTONE CONTRACT

I also generated specific questions geared towards the department as well as the University as a whole. These evolved over time for the various constituencies and are included in the appendices.

Four general questions were developed to acknowledge the underlying purpose of this project as well as to serve as the foundation of my experience. These four general questions emerged as follows:

What does it mean to be identified in the Strategic Plan?

What does enhancement mean?

How has this affected the various programs and their constituents and stakeholders mentioned?

What needs to be done to facilitate or further the impact of the Strategic Plan to achieve the appropriate impact by a certain time?

FOUR PHASE PLAN

To carry this pilot project to completion, I devised a **Four Phase Plan**. These phases (below) systematically occurred over this semester. Throughout the pilot review process, I researched leadership roles of many individuals concerned with Strategic and Academic Planning, as may be evidenced within the leadership analysis section.

Phase One was developed by observing and working directly with the Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, as well as the chairman of the history department. These

initial conferences allowed me to grasp the underlying concepts of VCU and to redirect and prioritize my tasks. These were redefined as the pilot project, analysis of mission for leadership ethos, and examination of academic leadership hierarchy both as individuals and group members.

Phase Two analyzed the impact of the Strategic Plan on the commended history department through indepth interviews and research. This phase enabled me to interview the concerned stakeholders (faculty, staff, and students) as well as the other Strategic planners and administrators who had not previously been included.

Phase Three assessed and drew conclusions on the data gathered through interviews and literature reviews. This phase also created and delineated a specific procedure for conducting future pilots, along the authority of the original four questions.

Phase Four revolves around writing this paper and presenting my final product to a select audience of VCU administrators and planners. This paper with its recommendations and evaluations will be provided to all supporters of my capstone experience.

When the final pilot is complete, it will permit the Office of Academic Planning to administer a different measure of assessing the Strategic Plan. Currently, the initial pilot project provides an accurate measure of several programs within SD#4. I can only hope that I was effective in analyzing and helping to facilitate enhancement through my recommendations to the faculty and administrators.

My leadership studies curriculum has been quite useful to me while serving as a consultant to those implementing SD#4. This has allowed me to learn to effectively listen and observe key situations within an academic arena as well as to the participants themselves. As an outsider, I endeavored to be an effective consultant. I tried to immerse myself into the VCU

culture and to understand the curriculum and all other aspects of academic life that I was evaluating. While conducting this field service, I reviewed various facets of leadership displayed within the University's academic hierarchy. I worked closely with the Office of Academic Planning as well as the Dean and history department chairman, in order to observe several persons of significant leadership.

While serving as a consultant, my personal leadership role developed through opportunities for interacting with persons from several departments and offices with diverse backgrounds and concerns. Individual activities centered around completing the underlying three tasks previously defined, and observing the academic arena within our office as well as the broader scope provided by specific faculty and administrators being examined within the pilot project. The interviews and interactions enabled me to properly assess specific impacts and concerns.

ANALYSIS OF PHASES

The phases of this pilot project have been previously defined and discussed. These formed the CAPSTONE TIME LINE⁵ which helped to keep me on target throughout the entirety of this enterprise. As stated on this time line, at the completion of my Capstone

⁵Appendix II -- TIME LINE

Experience, I hope to have provided viable information to answer the underlying premises of my first task. Again, this pilot will *assess the impact of the Strategic Plan on identified programs and the subsequent impact on stake-holders (faculty, staff, and students) and their concerns (finances and curriculum).*

This project has proceeded like clock-work. The questions have been used and revised in order to gain fresh perspectives about certain aspects of VCU and its Strategic Plan. Throughout the research gathering phases, I interviewed eighteen historians, the Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, and a group of students (graduate and undergraduate) as well as specific administrators and planners who have definite insights to contribute from their experiences of the process.⁶ With the conclusion of all interviews, I assessed the impact of the Strategic Plan on the designated history department and decided to compile two lists of recommendations. While one shows the positive enhancements, the other identifies where implementation has fallen down and must be improved.

As far as the results and outcomes are concerned, the difficulty of my project centered around whether concise conclusions could be found in the data analysis of the twenty-six interviews. There was also the question of the actual reporting due to the sensitivity of those who provided invaluable assistance, yet may not be the best leaders in the world. As a trained historian, I quickly overcame these obstacles because one always records the facts regardless of truth. This is not to say that I am not grateful to these men and women, but not just anyone can be a leader in the academic context.

The short and long term implications of my capstone experience for the various

⁶Appendix III -- Questions

participants at VCU are many. The Office of Academic Planning now has an effective measure by which to assess not only each of the fifteen directions, but also each individually designated department or program. The history department, my case study, has been given a list of recommendations for intra-departmental changes and improvements. Other implications revolve around my leadership analysis and simply depend on how seriously my opinion is taken.

CASE STUDY

Having previously explored my case study of the history department, I would like to render both my compliments as well as my perceived suggestions for the implementation of VCU's Strategic Plan. This facet of the paper incorporates the technological aspect of the initial Four Phase Plan. My questions, as mentioned earlier, were developed and then overhauled for appropriate changes. Answers to these analytical measures form the basis of the following:

Reinforcing Enhancements

- **Qualitative expansion of program as well as qualitative process/improvements!**
- **SP benefits all university with extensive computer networks and improved Library facilities/funds**
- **Master of Arts program**
- **REWARDS/MERITS Document (salary & promotion based on balanced system)**
- **new course perspectives offered culturally & intellectually**
- **excellent Communication with Dean (within President's favor)**
- **positive attitudes @ administration and work as a whole**
- **faculty kept informed of steps undertaken in SP
{those uninformed due to lack of interest}**
- **wider course variety and enhanced quality of programs**
- **promotes sense of appreciation throughout University**
- **indications of belief in supportive/responsive administration**
- **innovative proposals for performance objectives and roles for undergraduates' general education requirements**
- **encourages faculty to apply for and obtain grants**
- **distinguished Visiting Professors**
- **Dr. Kennedy replaced, but could still return.
{20th century person replaced w/American-Social historian}**
- **Medievalist and Asianist added w/ Africanist being hired**
- **Perhaps one more African-American historian next year!
[Perhaps two more tenure-track faculty including GA professor]**

Proposed Recommendations

- increase Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)
- more faculty lines
- reduced teaching loads
- faculty w/ 2 courses per semester
- ✓ - Is MA program causing only more grief?
- travel money to give papers and build networks
- more Student-Faculty Interaction
- social affairs for students needed
- better publicity for sponsored events
- Alumni newsletter essential.

- **Alexandrine Society (History Club)** strengthened
- Library money appreciated, but more research funds needed
- establish Phi Alpha Theta
- funds for research--faculty must constantly look.
- work on new book...2 years leave {one year for writing & one for research}
- students need remedial aid...Special Services!!!
- Macrolevel organization...does MA really need to be here?
- administration needs to make distinctions between MA & enhancement!
- new secretary
- better computer system

- teaching and scholarship should become dual-concerns not outweigh each other
- private endowments should be found
- personal attention declines with overload...smaller classes
- new lecturers into department from other schools.
- replacement faculty needed for sabbaticals.
- more time and leniency toward creative, new courses
- dire need for more women/minority scholars...
- **Professional Development**
- ✓ - extraordinary pressure forces small #s to serve on large #s.

- more diverse curriculum to relate with student population
- Couple more of anything would help teaching loads.
- Grant-in-Aid program...restrictions need to be revised!
- new copy machine
- facilities need to be tuned-up (overhauled)
- classroom maps and visual aids
- need to be true to standards of research
- look at requirements for major @ Dept. meetings
- need more History 485 & 490 }---Seminar classes for majors

- course reductions must be permanent
 - absence from conferences sabotages careers
 - salary (comparable standards to people who have contributed)
 - Admin should ask/receive faculty & departmental approval on issues
 - reduction in committee-work
 - (20 years of this constant planning w/no results)
 - Antiquarian books needed whereas Library funds go for 1970s books to present publishing dates
 - Honors Program defunct...needs resources to improve!
 - more release time
 - specific guidelines for sabbaticals need to be regular
 - VCU problem of attracting top-notch undergraduates
- 7 - **End anti-intellectual attitudes!!!**
- Need to cut graduate students full-load if TAs, or else allow them a finesse course.
 - sabbatical needs (no opportunity to leave -- must remain teaching at least one class while on-leave). Leave of absences instead of sabbaticals, perhaps we should follow UVA's process.

University Improvement...

- too much emphasis on show {PR}
- too much pushing of unscholarly programs
 - [counter-productive if funds/time needed within Dept.]

New Historical lines recommended:

Africanist historian
 Asianist historian
 American Historian [Federalist era...Nationalist movements]
 American (Diplomatic Historian)
 Middle Eastern Historian
 Early/Modern European Historian
 French Historian
 Caribbean historian
 South-Asianist {India & Afghanistan}
 Public Historian

- {offer historic directions for others besides students}

*---No Urban Historian, Chris Silver provides enough for now because not a pressing or massive problem!

**---These are recommendations gathered during interviews.

LEADERSHIP STUDIES ANALYSIS

While focusing on my case study, I incorporated specific questions related to leadership and followership. This analysis helped me to show how specific leadership concepts apply to the strategic planning process. As one will find, most of my theoretical leadership studies analysis has been incorporated with the literature review in the next section.

Strategic planning, in and of itself, is an academic pursuit of little direct use to any organization. The payoff of strategic planning is in its application, in the execution and implementation of the strategic plan...

The successful implementation of a strategic plan is no small accomplishment. It requires the initial creativity and energy to develop the plan, the courage and commitment to introduce it, and the persistence and thoroughness to see it through to its implementation. Without a strong pressure for ensuring its implementation, there is little or no reason for developing a strategic plan.⁷

Literature indicates that most of the break-downs in the strategic planning process occur during implementation. Thus an efficient leader is needed to direct and delegate the procedure. The Provost embodies this chosen wizard of future changes.

Leadership within the strategic process begins with the first draft and hopefully continues until all directions have been implemented or eliminated. The essence of this academic leadership is to articulate a compelling vision that motivates others to get on board and participate. Therefore effective leadership is producing progress and moving the University in the right directions.

A strategic plan requires a champion who can shepherd it through the University. Each

⁷L. D. Goodstein, T. M. Nolan, and J. W. Pfeiffer, Applied Strategic Planning: A Comprehensive Guide (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), 325.

of the two provosts who have worked on this process, has a different leadership style, but both have been effective in moving the plan through appropriate channels and eventually delegating the various directions to be implemented. Important to note, movers and shakers at all levels of the University were forced to take ownership. Administrative leadership is key to the plan's success.

As stated by the Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, "VCU's Academic Leadership is leading value formation among other institutions." This academic hierarchy honestly believes in becoming leader among other similar universities. As society changes, VCU does lead the pack with its University without Walls philosophy. This institution with such an urban mission accepts the cultural changes and diversity of the 1990s. VCU accepts differences and promotes diverse interests of dual-communities (campus & city).

Returning to my case study, one can evaluate the effectiveness of strategic process from a designated program's point-of-view. Most faculty were aware of the SP, since the chairman asked for input to return to the Dean. This plan has been successful because it was placed in the hands of those truly effected. The strategic plan combines mission and action, with quality considerations rather than financial. As with any process, the plan is flawed, but essential. The leadership challenge is to make sure every program has a viable stake. Administrators must keep all constituencies involved, even though only a few are actually affected.

As this process continues, VCU will face many challenges ahead. Administrators must keep strategic directions well-focused, even when budget and staff problems attempt to force them to the background. Also, these men and women need to use the strategic directions as ways to help deal with issues facing VCU, especially morale problems caused by financial

restraints placed by the state.

INTEGRATION & CITATION OF APPLICABLE LITERATURE

Upon completion of my literature review on strategic and academic planning with specific emphasis on the leadership role, I definitely saw many leadership trends that I had studied both inside and outside of the leadership studies curriculum. Having paid particular attention to how the process should be done and how VCU's approach compares to information found in the literature, I was able to effectively analyze both VCU's mission for a leadership ethos and its leadership hierarchy (as individuals and group members). One point of explanation, the personal leadership section does not contain heavy citation because the literature was very managerial and general points of knowledge.

As VCU strives toward tomorrow, the academic administrators must ensure a bright future with their strategic planning. The Dean of the School of Community Service at the University of North Texas, recently wrote:

Faculty and administrative leadership have the challenge and responsibility for effectively articulating the institution's mission and goals as well as fostering an identity that reflects these priorities.⁸

⁸Daniel M. Johnson, "Leadership Challenges for Metropolitan Universities: Issues and Approaches," Metropolitan Universities, Winter 1994, Volume 5, No. 3, 21.

In his foreword to George Keller's pivotal book, Academic Strategy, Richard Cyert (former President of Carnegie-Mellon University) foretold of the approaching need for "decisive campus leadership."⁹

As VCU attempts to become a leader among public, urban, research universities, a subtle cultural change is occurring within and changing the Ethos of the institution. Each president arrives wanting to clarify the urban mission and strongly suggests that academic administrators should speed up process. VCU must maintain excellence and continue to innovate with non-traditional roles by accepting roots and perspectives of community – not the wishes of a bureaucrat stuck in his ivory tower. Therefore, diversification with new horizons is the most appropriate way to define VCU's **ETHOS**.

If VCU is truly to assume the role as an effective leader among other universities, then intrinsic leadership must emerge. Administrators have to not only plan, but also act upon their ideas. To transform this university will take efforts from all quadrants of the VCU community. Realistic goals must be set and new relationships established with the University of Richmond and the outside Community. VCU's true leadership will be creating an innovative leadership which will promote Community diversity.

Aside from VCU's mission, one should concentrate on the leadership hierarchy which controls the academic aspects of its future. Academic administration is truly a combination of two worlds. In one aspect, each individual has a unique, ~~personalized~~ point-of-view and works to implement policies alone. While from another perspective, each person should work well in groups for interaction and supportive initiatives.

⁹Johnson, 19.

Individual Life

As one has learned previously, leadership is not a position, but a role or process. Having spoken of the strategic process, I felt compelled to address the leadership of the individuals within the academic administrative hierarchy of VCU.

Leaders must emerge willing to work, to lead by example, to take ultimate responsibility, and to commit to members as well as their goals and decisions. Within certain groups, everyone starts off as a contender for a leadership position, but each individual remains only one human being. Each person must be responsible for a share of the total work, in order to ensure that the goals of group are met as a whole. Therefore, each individual ultimately determines his/her own success, while aiding in the group's achievements.

I believe in the old phrase, when God closes a door, he opens a window somewhere. Life has many ups and downs, but always continues forward. Leadership may be seen best through the important decisions of each person's lifetime.

Consequential decisions are just as intense as the next move in a highly competitive chess game. One can equate life as a game to be played and played well. Society has taught each individual to strive to be the master of the game throughout life. As by Omnipotent Providence, each person has a focus and function in life. Each person is to be a leader in some aspect of society. Always striving to be the Master of the Game, each individual must concentrate upon becoming the best leader within a given context.

Having analyzed the provost as an example in the previous section, I intend to concentrate solely on the Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences as a leader. This man

receives great praise as a leader and many refer to him as the "Philosopher King."

This leader feels commitment to his followers and his philosophies brings success. The Dean describes his leadership like an orchestra director who keeps individuals focused on personal aspects and brings the College together at one time. He believes in converging on one issue at a time with staff and constituents accepting delegation of responsibility and accountability. This leader excels due to the combination of his visionary nature and his task-orientation.

As mentioned earlier, I feel that educators are the most effective leaders in today's society because they personify leaders who work to serve others. These selfless individuals serve to educate the future of our world, and usually receive little compensation other than a meager salary and the pride of helping others.

Servant leaders are special people. A servant leader empowers others through his or her smile, touch, or kind words. This person motivates people to help themselves and strives to raise those being helped to higher planes. As pointed out by Kelley, leaders provide service toward followers and motivate them to fulfill their ideas and goals. This ideal is best personified in Herman Hesse's Journey to the East. Hesse, along with Greenleaf, helped society to define the radical concept of a servant as a leader. This one diverse idea helped change contemporary thoughts toward leadership studies and societal views. The term "leader" no longer carries its fatal or negative connotation. Leaders may be helpful citizens working for the welfare of fellow beings.

The academic administrators must lead as university citizens not as dictators without a real world clue. Thus cynicism will decline and individual leaders will cultivate a following of

believers. These men and women must set a moral tone with underlying values being promoted and aspirations urged toward the future.

Group Life

Characteristics of the VCU Administrative Group Hierarchy

Donelson Forsyth described a group as "two or more interdependent individuals who influence one another through social interaction."¹⁰ This definition applies to the members of VCU's academic hierarchy, but a more complex handling of the group's characteristics will be needed. As the definition implies, the administrators (as I will refer to them) maintain a very high interdependence among themselves; however, one may look further into the group's life by observing the interaction, structure, size, unity, goals, and temporal change.

Interaction causes all members to influence each other. This characteristic is key to group life. VCU administrators must interact with each other on a consistent basis, at least once a week. These men and women influence each other through their words, actions, and sometimes silence. The meetings allow a lot of group discussion and time for almost everyone to voice opinions. This group's interaction is very valuable, but more often than not, a powerful member's words can swing debate as well as final voting in new directions.

Structure is very important to any organization, but especially to an organization must

¹⁰Donelson R. Forsyth, Group Dynamics (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks & Cole Publishing Company, 1983), 7.

maintain order and accomplish certain matters each meeting. This structure is very stratified and hierarchical with each member occupying a certain position. There is the exalted, supreme head, usually referred to as the President. Then in precedence, there are the various vice-presidents and directors. Administrators divide themselves into committees along power and interest lines. All members are hired and must preserve the grace of higher state officials. Because of its importance, this hierarchical group provides a status of authority that commands respect as well as specific roles to members.

Though Size may vary from group to group and is not considered a critical influence of group life, some members could be affected by the number of associates. The executive administrators form a quaint little group, while the hierarchy as a whole is quite massive. Its size makes the organization effective for two reasons. First, decisions may be reached with many opinions in a rather short time period. Second, there are enough members to represent the various institutional concerns without too much complexity and without the loss of interdependence as can be seen with much larger groups.

The VCU administrative hierarchy states its main underlying goal through its mission statement -- to serve and educate the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia. As with any university or similar organization, a new set of goals is derived each year with new and old members combining to work on them. As may be evidenced, Goals are very important for an organization to function toward and to attain success.

As within any university, whether public or private, Cohesiveness links administrators to each other through common bonds. This is an important link that allows members to influence each other. The administrators work with cohesion to such an extent that sometimes

groupthink may occur. Cohesion helps the group to reach consensus on most issues that come up for discussion. This important aspect may be more effectively viewed through the Schwenk/Cosier article that showed how decision-making could be greatly affected through reaching consensus on every issue. The article also showed how an effective leader who played devil's advocate could change a whole group's decisions.

The last of these six characteristics, but very important to group life, is **Temporal Change**. As one knows, the world is a constantly changing and evolving environment, thus each person will witness a myriad of changes within his/her life span. A group, like a person, has a typical life span which can be longer or shorter depending on many factors. For now, accept this change and wait, because I will return to the change of group life through stages later.

Group Formation

The underlying reason for groups is the concept that people need people. There have been numerous studies on why groups form, but especially helpful is Forsyth's list of reasons. Various administrators existed at each of the institutions which now form VCU. The direct ancestor of this group formed in the early 1970s as an organization meant to lead the institution, but the same group no longer exists. This hierarchy's administrative group life has evolved over the last twenty-odd years and new lives have come and gone. The present group life was established with the arrival of the charismatic leader, President Eugene Trani, and will most probably end for a new formation as he moves on or redirects his vision.

One must understand that people join groups to satisfy and adapt their needs. Forsyth created a list that he felt would encompass most of these needs. This includes: survival, psychological, informational, interpersonal, and practical needs. Through studying all of these needs, one can derive two orientations and reasons as given by Forsyth. Groups form so that people develop a sense of identity (socio-emotional orientation) and people can enact membership within the group (task orientation).

When studying the academic administrators at VCU, one could use a variety of measurements to study the behavior and relationships among group members. One of the best measurements is the IPA (Interaction Process Analysis) which classifies each members behaviors through 12 categories. This specifically deals with the two orientations as discussed above. The socio-emotional activity (expressive) deals with actions based on the interpersonal relationships within groups. The task activity (instrumental) deals with behavior focusing on problem group is trying to solve. Bales makes the assumption that members strive for a balance between the two concerns.

While on the subject of **Group Formation**, one must look at Moreland's "Formation of small groups" which gives credence to original ideas, while bringing forth a few new thoughts. The author wrote that conditions surrounding a group's formation often affect its subsequent development. Moreland also wrote that members come together freely and often unintentionally, although some join already existent groups. This last concept is new and may in part apply to VCU academic administrators. Due to their jobs, these men and women meet out of necessity, not because of some social or evolutionary force. However, the members and underlying ideas of the hierarchy's foundation have changed or evolved through the last twenty-odd years.

Influential Factors

Groups evolve over time with a set of external and internal factors. VCU's academic hierarchy has evolved as the different perceptions of the state administrations and university presidencies have changed. This group runs itself internally, but must constantly listen to the many outside forces from all directions.

The external factors of this group do indeed influence the performance and vision of excellence. This men and women strive as the leaders of the university to be beyond reproach. Economically, these individuals control the university's projects, but the Board of Visitors (BoV) appointed by the governor make the real purse-string decisions. The group answers to the President who in turn answers to the BoV directly and often. Every administrator is personally accountable to students and higher administration for the actions taken individually and collectively within this group. The academic administrators set forth the university's vision and their effectiveness has certainly shown with the development and implementation of their Strategic Plan.

The internal factor influencing this academic hierarchy come from the members observing themselves individually and from the group evaluating itself periodically through surveys and reports. This group must become unified and work hard to successfully accomplish the plethora of duties and responsibilities placed before it. Each member is expected to contribute on an individual level as well as within the collective group. The goals are very optimistic and my be accomplished if each member is dedicated and manages his/her time efficiently. When meetings are held, members are to be present, to put personalty differences aside and to work hand-in-

hand with each fellow member. This group has done a very impressive job in achieving its group goals and in promoting the Strategic Plan. The higher administrators agree with the ideals set forth by this group, but perhaps another effort should be made to encompass student interests which seem to have been lost in the ensuing strategic (and academic) planning process.

Group Development

The development of groups is yet another phenomenon which can be answered in various ways. One knows that all groups share the common feature of change. Forsyth shows that group development may be described as the patterns of growth and change that occur in groups throughout their life cycle, from formation to dissolution. This has also been dubbed a process of progression rather than regression.¹¹ The academic administrative hierarchy of VCU provides the perfect example of group development over time.

As mentioned earlier, groups must always change for good or bad. Two patterns have emerged to explain the most prevalent developmental changes. First, the cyclical model suggests that certain issues dominate group interaction during various stages of group development, but can also reoccur later in the group life. Theorist Bales created the equilibrium model to suggest that members strive to maintain balance between accomplishing task and enhancing quality of interpersonal relationships, and tend to shift back and forth between stages. Second, the successive-stage theory specifies a specific order for the phase of group development. Theorist Tuckman created the widely accepted 5 stages of Group Development which follow the

¹¹Forsyth, 75-90.

successive-stage theory.¹² The academic administrators merge these two patterns by accepting parts of both. This group tends to cycle in order through the various stages repeatedly, maintaining a balance while revisiting dominant issues.

As pointed out as well as can be observed, there are over one hundred stage models in existence. This paper only examines a particularly dominant stage model that applied perfectly to the academic hierarchy. However, this feat is not practical nor logical because many different aspects of the various models can be applied. Therefore, I decided to apply the top three models in varying aspects as they pertain to this VCU group.

Start with Tuckman's stage model since many consider it to be the most typical. Tuckman's first (Forming), third (Norming), and fourth (Performing) stages are continual with the second (Storming) being forced each time members rotate on or off. Most members whether old or new, were not around for the original Forming and Norming, but because of the renewal each semester, each comes to understand the expectations and "correct" behaviors. Everyone takes part in the Performing stage, whether an individual or group task. Tuckman tried to make sense of these stages and others in his article about the developmental sequence. Tuckman's stage model does apply to the hierarchy, but this group does move in a continual order due to its structure and other influential forces.¹³

Lacoursiere created another performance stage model like his counter-part Tuckman. His model introduced in 1980, was very similar to Tuckman's model. His phases were designed as

¹²Forsyth, 75-90.

¹³Bruce W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequences in Small Groups," Psychological Bulletin, Volume 63, No. 6, 1965, 384-399.

follows: Orientation, Dissatisfaction, Resolution, Production, and Termination. The academic hierarchy of VCU may be applied to this stage model in the same way as above.¹⁴

Last but far from least, Slater introduced the comprehensive model which gave unique insights into groups and their development. Although very simplistic, this model seems to work perfectly for telling the academic administration's history over the past years as their Strategic Plan has evolved. One starts with the university receiving a new president and a new vision for the future. This stage was truly the Leaders seen as gods. This continues until disillusionment among faculty and students sets in and the administrator were accused of mistakes and mismanagement. thus the Leaders seen as fallible as well as faced with Revolt. The members who had controlled for years were beginning to retire and the constituents began to second-guess this group's effectiveness. Some new changes occurred, especially with a new Provost to redirect and take stock among majority's beliefs. Now the hierarchy being faced with ineffectiveness through Post-Revolt Guilt, has cleaned out most of the slackards and started building for a better tomorrow. It is within this last stage that Slater's article on role differentiation could best be applied to teach the members how to diversify themselves and to build an effective, efficient ruling body without the petty individualism of the past.¹⁵

¹⁴R. B. Lacoursiere, The Life Cycle of Groups (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980).

¹⁵P. E. Slater, "Role Differentiation in Small Groups," American Sociological Review, Volume 20, 1955, 300-310.

Leadership Issues

As with any group there will be leadership, but especially with a group of academic administrators (leaders). Leadership will become an expected aspect of the members who wish to participate as representatives for their constituents and specific areas of concern. Many issues arise within this group meeting and must be answered to some degree for better or for worse.

As one has learned previously, leadership is not a position, but a role or process. Leaders must emerge willing to work, to lead by example, to take ultimate responsibility, and to commit to members as well as their goals. Within certain groups, everyone starts off as a contender for a leadership position. Within this administrative hierarchy, every member is a leader in his/her own right, but only a few may realize their ultimate potential by serving in the highest offices at various institutions.

Group Conflict may occur anywhere over very minute points or order or controversial issues with profound effects. Because of unity mentioned before, this group has very infrequent major conflicts which split the organizational hierarchy.

Conflicts over the leadership roles is very common for an academic hierarchy of leaders, but good people may be lost and feelings bent out of shape. Controversial issues -- especially changes brought from the Strategic Plan -- have affected a few friendships. Fortunately, most conflicts end with reconciliations among feuding parties due to the fact that members must work together constantly.

The power structure of the hierarchy is very effective in conveying direct leadership images to the general public. Each member serves a specific division of the university, thus

leadership acceptance remains very high. The structure has already been explained in precedence, but one must understand that power derives along the same lines. As an outsider, one might observe a very hierarchal structure with power designated from the top. However, all insiders know that each person has some power just in varying degrees. The President or Provost, depending on who is presiding at the meeting, must work to maintain a plain of peaceful co-existence with other members. Overall, the power structure facilitates effective group member-leader relationships for all academic administrators.

One last interesting leadership issue that this group, but more specifically the provost (or president), must consider, is the group under pressure due to environment and structure. This point was effectively brought to light by Worchel and Shackelford in their joint article. This article showed that structure should facilitate group process and performance, but that pre-arranged group structures sometimes diminished individual freedom. This structure promoted interpersonal relationships and performance, but problems generally occurred with a stressful environment. Hence, the president must conduct meetings that will be conducive for all the members to benefit without aggravation or anxiety. Therefore, the authors pointed out that group structure would have to depend to some extent on the outside environment and its influences.¹⁶

¹⁶Stephen Worchel and Susan L. Shackelford, "Groups Under Stress: The Influence of Group Structure and Environment on Process and Performance," Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin Volume 17 (December 1991), 640-648.

Group Life Closure

Having applied the stage models to the academic administrative hierarchy of VCU, one can move forward to analyze and ponder the effectiveness of this group. These administrators have been effective in many ways with building community and moving certain relevant issues and projects such as the Strategic Plan, forward.

This group's composition seems to be filled with many well-skilled, competent leaders energized for the future and educated by the past.

These leaders believe in contributing and accomplishing as much as possible by the conclusion of their Five-Year Plan in 1999. The communication with faculty, staff, and students has improved and taken on new momentum. Having received widespread support and approval from both the campus community and the state BoV, these men and women have once more become a body of motivated leaders. With an eye to the future, one might predict that this group with the appropriate leadership from the Provost might soon transition very peacefully for the benefit of their dual-communities into another group life.

Before concluding this study of individual and group life, one should contemplate the complexities of strategic planning as an organizational change agent within higher education. Remember, the "central focus of strategic planning is developing a good fit between the

organization's activities and the demands of the environment around it."¹⁷

Professor Baldrige writes that Strategic Planning...

- a. Focuses on the Organization's Destiny
- b. Is usually the Task of Top Echelon Managers
- c. Time orientations are short range and medium range
- d. Is extremely sensitive to environment @ organization
- e. Fundamentally an Art rather than a Science
- f. Stream of decisions in — vs. right decision

One should also take a brief look at the article Resetting the Clock. This discusses the dynamics of organizational change and failure. This article shows that change can be beneficial or disastrous depending totally on the timing within the life cycle of the group.¹⁸ One can look at the academic hierarchy and see the times when change has occurred, whether helpful or harmful depends totally on the timing and situation.

This project incorporated applicable readings which paid specific attention to those leadership roles within this academic arena. Having concentrated on the various facets of leadership found within the University academic hierarchy, I not only analyzed individuals as leaders, but also weighed VCU as an effective and emergent leader of the future.

¹⁷J. Victor Baldrige and Terrence Deal, "Strategic Planning in Higher Education: Does the Emperor Have Any Clothes?," The Dynamics of Organizational Change in Education (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1983), Chapter 9, 167-185.

¹⁸Terry L. Amburgey, Dawn Kelly, and William P. Barnett, "Resetting the Clock: The Dynamics of Organizational Change and Failure," Administrative Science Quarterly, Volume 38, No. 1, 1993, 51-74.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Since this is an original work, my personal reflections have been included throughout in the form of my opinions and analyses. My three tasks have been completed and only a final presentation to the VCU academic administrative hierarchy remains. I feel very proud of my pilot project which is a unique measure by which the Office of Academic Planning may analyze their various strategic directions in the future.

This experience has caused me to grow both intellectually and personally. My previous impressions of an unseen and unexplored VCU are not even worth writing down. VCU is definitely a place with great potential towards becoming one of the leaders among public, urban, research universities. This is a viable progressive institution of higher learning, which must continue to advance in terms of sound leadership. Its emphasis on excellence for both the academic and social lives of its constituents is a positive perspective that should not be overlooked or underestimated.

After my initial meetings, I determined to use this senior project not only as a capstone of my leadership studies curriculum, but also as a guide to gaining more experience about college administration as a career. I became very excited about this incredible opportunity provided by the Office of Academic Planning. This experience has allowed me to gain unique academic affairs experience at an urban, public institution while working on its strategic plan.

In concluding upon VCU and its strategic planning process, I would like to make a prediction for the future. Within the next twenty-odd years, Virginia Commonwealth University will become a leading institution among America's public universities. I feel that its leadership,

in part, will be based upon its Community diversity. VCU is now moving towards merging its Gesellschaft (urban community) image with that of old Richmond's Gemeinschaft (unified community with spirit) attitude.

As the final weeks of my leadership studies education at the University of Richmond draw to a close, I tend to reflect back on my innovative experience as one of the highlights of my life. Leadership studies has come to mean more than a major to me. Each individual needs to develop the most conceivable and conceptual definition to his or her own point of view.

Personally, I have merged the two concepts of historical and servant leadership, which are most compatible with my personal leadership style and beliefs. Leadership has come to mean the mutual actions and deeds of leaders and their followers, throughout history and in contemporary society. As once promised, everything seems to be coming together and I am using my own working definition as it applies with my life and those around me. I honestly feel renewed now that the journey toward this "truth" is nearing its zenith.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Amburgey, Terry L.; Kelly, Dawn; and Barnett, William P. "Resetting the Clock: The Dynamics of Organizational Change and Failure." Administrative Sociological Quarterly. Volume 38, Number 1, 1993.
- Baldrige, J. Victor, and Deal, Terrence. "Strategic Planning in Higher Education: Does the Emperor Have Any Clothes?" The Dynamics of Organizational Change in Education. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1983.
- Birnbaum, Robert. How Academic Leadership Works: Understanding Success and Failure in the College Presidency. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992.
- Eble, Kenneth E. The Art of Administration. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1978.
- Forsyth, Donelson R. Group Dynamics. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks & Cole Publishing Company, 1983.
- Goodstein, L. D.; Nolan, T. M.; and Pfeiffer, J. W. Applied Strategic Planning: A Comprehensive Guide. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993.
- Johnson, Daniel M. "Leadership Challenges for Metropolitan Universities: Issues and Approaches," Metropolitan Universities. Volume 5, Number 3, Winter 1994.
- Keller, George. Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education.
- Lacoursiere, R. B. The Life Cycle of Groups. New York: Human Science Press, 1980.
- Maxwell, John C. Leadership 101: Inspirational Quotes & Insights for Leaders. Tulsa, OK: Honor Books, Inc., 1994.
- Moreland, R. "The Formation of Small Groups." Group Processes. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing, 1987.
- Schwenk, Charles R., and Cosier, Richard A. "Effects of Consensus and Devil's Advocacy on Strategic Decision-making." Journal of Applied Science Psychology. Volume 23, January 1993.
- Slater, P. E. "Role Differentiation in Small Groups." American Sociological Review. Volume 20, 1955.

Tuckman, Bruce W. "Developmental Sequences in Small Groups." Psychological Bulletin. Volume 63, 1965.

Worchel, Stephen, and Shackelford, Susan L. "Groups Under stress: The Influence of Group Structure and Environment on Process and Performance." Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin. Volume 17 (December 1991).

Virginia Commonwealth University Documents

Report of the Commission on the Future of the University. A Strategic Plan For The Future of Virginia Commonwealth University. Office of Academic Planning, September 1993.

Virginia Commonwealth University Graduate Bulletin, 1992-94. Volume XXVI, Number 3, Office of graduate admissions, July 1992.